

## **Claudine Wilkins-Chambers Testimony - Rent Stabilization**

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Claudine Wilkins-Chambers. I live in New Haven, CT. I am a paraprofessional and a union member with Council 4.

I am testifying in support of a rent cap and in support of SB 4, with changes to better protect tenants.

All I know to do is fight when people are suffering, when communities of color are being ignored. During 11th grade, I skipped school to join a peaceful sit-in alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a group of other students. I later fled the racism of North Carolina in 1959 and moved to New Haven, hoping for a brighter future. I had hoped to leave prejudice in the South.

I bought a home in New Haven some years ago. I am a property owner and landlord for a few tenants in New Haven. I don't rip off the tenants. I am just trying to cover my own bills while making a little more housing available to working families. I am not trying to get rich off of people. I would rather have a tenant long term than for people to move in and out. Homeownership has allowed me to build some wealth in my community, which has been redlined. Longtime residents like myself continue to see the impacts of racism. Redlining isn't a practice of the past.

It's awful how mega-landlords are allowed to do what they want. My granddaughter lived in an apartment in Hamden where a landlord decided to raise the rent by \$700 last year. She could not afford it, so she had to scramble to find a new place to live. I helped her move and she stayed at my place until she signed a lease for an apartment in New Haven. One of her neighbors at the Hamden apartment complex had his rent raised by \$1,400. It's heartless and it's not right.

Last year, I went out and surveyed over 25 neighbors and community members so we can have our voices heard in the political process. One person I talked with described enduring run-down, rodent- and roach-infested living conditions. I suggested mice traps, but he explained that buying these traps would cut down on his money for gas and groceries, and the price of eggs and milk had almost doubled. Despite the serious health concerns, that house was all he could afford. Families are between a rock and a hard place.

Huge rent increases are very inconsiderate. Tenants' paychecks are not going to compensate for the raise in rent. Are people supposed to get a second and third job?

I strongly support a rent cap, but HB 6588 would be stronger with the following changes:

- **The cap should be lower—I suggest 3%.** This tracks pre-pandemic average rent increases and would be affordable and predictable to tenants.
- **It should cover apartments in between tenants** so landlords can't push out tenants to increase the rent.
- **It should expand good cause eviction protections** to cover all tenants so they have

greater stability in their homes.

Sincerely,

Claudine Wilkins-Chambers  
New Haven, CT